

VZCZCXYZ0000  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNT #0609/01 1511321  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 301321Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9717  
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3993  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0206  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4608  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0484  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0161  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0490  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4212  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2493  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0523  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1157  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1820  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1204  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0282  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2482  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0067

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000609

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/30/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER OPPOSITIONIST SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS'  
IMPRISONMENT

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The grandson of a prominent oppositionist was recently sentenced to four years' imprisonment for assaulting two individuals with a knife, but we do not believe that he was targeted because of his previous involvement in opposition politics. On May 23, the independent Harakat.net website reported that Anvar Karimov - the grandson of Olim Karimov, one of the founders of the Birlik and Free Farmers opposition political parties - was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. In 2007, Karimov came back to Uzbekistan from Sweden, where he worked for Erk opposition party leader Muhammad Solih, after the Uzbek government allegedly offered to let him return to Uzbekistan if he abandoned his political activities. Karimov's wife explained that her husband was arrested after unknown individuals beat him and several other members of her family in December 2007. She believes that her husband was targeted because of his opposition activities. However, the Human Rights Director in Tashkent reported to poloff having a conversation with Karimov's lawyer, in which the lawyer expressed her belief that Karimov was in fact guilty of attacking the two individuals, one of whom was romantically involved with his wife in the past. We also have further reason to doubt the credibility of Karimov's wife. End summary.

GRANDSON OF PROMINENT OPPOSITIONIST GIVEN FOUR YEAR SENTENCE  
-----

¶2. (U) The independent Harakat.net website reported on May 23 that Anvar Karimov - the grandson of Olim Karimov, one of the founders of the Birlik and Free Farmers opposition political parties - was recently sentenced to four years' imprisonment for "encroaching on Uzbekistan" (Note: The article, which is in Uzbek, is poorly written and according to Embassy FSN, it is difficult to interpret what the author meant by "encroaching on Uzbekistan." End note.) Quoting Karimov's spouse, Dilobar Khudoyberganova, the article states that Karimov was arrested on December 31, 2007, after he returned to Uzbekistan from Sweden, where he worked for the

Erk opposition political party.

#### WIFE ARGUES THAT KARIMOV IS VICTIM OF PROVOCATION

-----

13. (C) Poloff has followed the Karimov case since January and has met on several occasions with Khudoyberganova. According to Khudoyberganova, the couple's troubles reportedly began shortly before the New Year, when an unknown individual began making harassing phone calls to her. On December 31, as Karimov and Khudoyberganova were celebrating the New Year with their family, the unknown individual called again and said he was downstairs outside of their apartment building. When Karimov and a few of Khudoyberganova's relatives went downstairs, they were attacked by a large number of unknown men. Several of Khudoyberganova's relatives were reportedly injured in the attack, including Karimov's mother, Gulhar Aripova, the head of a local human rights group. Police arrived in the midst of the fracas, and proceeded to arrest Karimov and allow the attackers to flee. After Karimov's arrest, Khudoyberganova reported being threatened by law enforcement officials not to publicize Karimov's case. Khudoyberganova speculated that Karimov was the victim of a deliberate provocation and was targeted because of his opposition activities and his desire to participate in the 2009 Parliamentary election as an independent candidate.

14. (C) On May 19, Khudoyberganova told poloff that a criminal court in Tashkent on April 25 sentenced Karimov to four years' imprisonment for assaulting two brothers, Karim and Alim Nasirov, with a knife. The charges against Karimov originally included attempted murder, but the charge was later dropped. Karimov will spend his sentence at a minimum security prison, which he will be allowed to leave during the day to work. Khudoyberganova said that they did not plan to appeal the conviction, as they considered his sentence relatively light (the prosecutor in the case reportedly called for a ten year sentence), and Karimov's sentence could be lengthened on appeal. Instead, Khudoyberganova intended to file a complaint with the Supreme Court. Khudoyberganova reported seeing Karimov last on April 29 at the Tashtuyrma prison in Tashkent, where he is being held until he is transferred to another prison. She noted that he appeared to be in good health, but under a lot of mental stress.

15. (C) Fearing for her family's safety, Khudoyberganova told poloff that she was sending several of her family members to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, where they intended to apply for asylum with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). She did not intend to leave Uzbekistan, as she was nine-month's pregnant and she did not want to abandon her husband.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH DIRECTOR DOUBTS SPOUSE'S ACCOUNT

-----

16. (C) Human Rights Watch (HRW) director Igor Vorontsov has closely followed Karimov's case and has been in close contact with Khudoyberganova, who used to work for HRW's Tashkent office and for several other human rights groups in town. On several occasions, Vorontsov expressed his doubt to poloff about Khudoyberganova's account of the alleged attack on December 31, noting that it appeared to change over time (Comment: Poloff also noted that Khudoyberganova's account had changed over time. For example, in January, she alleged that her family was attacked by thirty individuals, but in May she said that they were attacked by only five individuals. End comment.)

17. (C) In early May, Vorontsov told poloff that he had spoken with Karimov's lawyer, respected human rights lawyer Tatiana Davydova, who told him that she believed that Karimov was in fact guilty of assaulting the two brothers with a knife. Davydova reportedly expressed great frustration that Khudoyberganova had originally hidden from her the fact that she used to be romantically involved with one of the Nasirov

brothers. She believed that Karimov became jealous when Nasirov called Khudoyberganova, and later assaulted him and his brother with a knife (Comment: When asked by poloff on May 19, Khudoyberganova denied ever knowing the Nasirov brothers. End comment.) Given his doubts, Vorontsov decided not to pursue Karimov's case as a human rights issue. However, he noted that he was under heavy pressure to do so from his HRW colleagues who used to work in Tashkent and were friends with Khudoyberganova.

#### ----- PORTRAIT OF AN OPPOSITIONIST AS A YOUNG MAN

18. (C) In October 2007, poloff briefly met with the twenty-something Karimov, who struck him as a highly ambitious young man. Karimov had returned to Uzbekistan in 2007 from Sweden, where he had worked for a time for Erk opposition party leader Muhammad Solih. According to Karimov, in 2006, he received a letter from Uzbek government intermediaries, which offered him a leadership position in the pro-governmental Kamolat youth group if he returned to Uzbekistan and abandoned his opposition activities. He was then reportedly called by a government intermediary based in Ukraine, who invited Karimov to Kyiv to discuss the issue further. Karimov said that he spent six months in Kyiv on

the Uzbek government dime, spending most of his time with the children of wealthy Uzbek government officials who lived or studied in Ukraine. Karimov eventually accepted the government's offer to abandon his opposition activities and return to Uzbekistan, though he decided not to accept the position at Kamolat.

19. (C) Karimov insisted he accepted the government's offer in good faith, but he also expressed to poloff interest in running as an independent candidate in the Fall 2008 Parliamentary elections. Despite his young age, Karimov considered himself to be a savvy political operator. As he explained to poloff, he believed that he could successfully pursue a political career in Uzbekistan based on a uniquely Uzbek form of triangulation. In addition to his ties to the opposition, Karimov said he had connections to conservative religious leaders (including former Mufti Muhammad Sodiq) through his wife's family, who are from Tashkent's old city, and his grandfather, who was originally from Namangan. He also claimed ties to the ruling elite, noting that many members of his family held government positions, including his father, despite the fact that his grandfather was a prominent oppositionist.

110. (C) During the meeting with poloff, Karimov (implausibly) accused many human rights activists and oppositionists in Tashkent of being government agents and saboteurs, including several prominent individuals working for the Erk, Birlik, and Free Farmers opposition parties and various human rights groups. In particular, he accused current Free Farmers Party leaders Nigara Khidoyatova of "appearing almost from nowhere" to wrest control of the party from his grandfather in 2003. Karimov believed the takeover of the party was orchestrated by Khidoyatova's father, the academic Goga Khidoyatov, whom he also accused of working for the security services throughout his career.

#### ----- DEATH SENTENCE OF KHUDOYBERGANOVA'S BROTHER COMMUTED

111. (C) During her meeting with poloff on May 19, Khudoyberganova also reported that her brother Iskander Khudoyberganov, who was sentenced to death in 2002 for murder, had his sentence changed to 25 years' imprisonment on April 8, in line with the abolishment of the death penalty on January 1, 2008. Since Iskander has already spent 6 years in prison, he will serve another 19 years. Iskander was also transferred from death row at a maximum security prison to a lighter security prison in Jaslyk, Karakalpakstan (Comment: Although Jaslyk is often referred to as one of Uzbekistan's most notorious prisons, Khudoyberganova explained that several separate prison buildings exist in Jaslyk, and some

of them have better conditions than others. End comment.) Khudoyberganova noted that the Supreme Court was reviewing each death penalty case individually before deciding to change death sentences to 20 or 25 years' imprisonment. According to Mothers Against the Death Penalty and Torture director Tamara Chikunova, the government has already reviewed almost twenty death penalty cases.

COMMENT

-----

¶12. (C) Even by Uzbekistan standards, the Anvar Karimov case is murky. It is always possible that Karimov was targeted for provocation by authorities because of his involvement in opposition politics. Nevertheless, we do not believe that this was the case. More likely, as Karimov's own lawyer reportedly told the Human Rights Watch director in Tashkent, Karimov assaulted the Nasirov brothers after one of them harassed his wife by telephone.

¶13. (C) We also have serious doubts about Khudoyberganova's credibility based on our previous encounters with her. For example, last summer, Khudoyberganova told poloff that a prisoner being held by the U.S. government at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, had confessed to the murder her brother allegedly committed (Note: Khudoyberganova has long maintained that her brother was innocent. End note.) She then requested poloff's assistance in providing her a visa to travel to Philadelphia to visit the prisoner's American lawyer. Despite repeated requests by poloff, Khudoyberganova never followed up with the name and contact information of the American lawyer, and poloff began to suspect that Khudoyberganova invented the story. We are also concerned that her account of the alleged December 31 attack on her husband and family members has changed over time.

NORLAND